

Courthouse Journal

W W W . W A C O U N T I E S . O R G

Washington State Association of Counties
Washington Association of County Officials

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Final Agenda Set for WSAC 2001 Legislative Conference

With a conference theme focused on county-state relations, the Washington State Association of Counties' 2001 Legislative Conference promises to be informative, relevant and, yes—even fun. Preceded by committee meetings on November 14th and beginning the morning of November 15th at the WestCoast Silverdale Hotel in Kitsap County, the Conference includes the election of officers, adoption of the Association's annual budget and adoption of the legislative package as proposed by the Legislative Steering Committee.

The agenda begins on November 15th with an overview of the legal and historic relationship of county-state relations by Hugh Spitzer, a partner at Foster Pepper Shefelman and one of Washington's top scholars in state constitu-

tional law. Marty Brown, Director of the Office of Financial Management, will then discuss the state budget picture for 2002 and comment on county-state relations from the budget perspective. With that background, Barry Mitzman, one of the Northwest's best-known television journalists and a winner of the Peabody Award (the Pulitzer Prize of broadcasting), will then lead a discussion among legislators, state agency directors, county officials and a veteran Olympia observer on the current status of county-state relations. The wide-ranging discussion will cover a broad range of topics, such as:

- counties as agents of the state for functions such as elections, tax assessment and collection, public health protection, shorelines management;

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Timber Counties Will Meet at Legislative Conference to Discuss National Fire Plan, Substitution Rules

The Timber Counties of Washington will meet at 5:00 p.m., November 14 at the WSAC Legislative Conference in Silverdale. The agenda includes a briefing on development of a National Fire Plan by the US Forest Service by Skamania County Commissioner Al McKee and continued discussion of the Timber Substitution Rules Legislative Task Force created by House Concurrent Resolution 4410.

The Substitution Rules were adopted about 10 years ago in response to the export of raw log to overseas clients. The rules prevent companies that export from purchasing state timber to "substitute" for logs that they ship overseas. It is argued that the rules have weakened the market and resulted in fewer bidders and lower prices for timber from state land. On

the other hand, proponents of the rules argue that they protect small timber operators and mill owners in Washington from inflated prices.

Legislators reviewing the rules are very interested in county input. Dennis Hadaller, Lewis County Commissioner, is the county representative to the Task Force. Discussion of this topic began at the last Timber County meeting and was continued to the November 14th date in hopes of greater turn-out by affected counties.

The Timber Counties of Washington – which includes all 29 counties with state forest board trust lands or national forests – also will be electing officers at the November 14th meeting.

Final Agenda Set for WSAC 2001 Legislative Conference

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- partnerships with the state in managing programs such as mental health;
- our role in implementing state-mandated programs such as growth management;
- our shared responsibilities for law and justice programs.

Attorney General Christine Greoire then joins us as the Luncheon Speaker. Washington's 16th State Attorney General and the first woman elected to the position in state history, is now in her third term. A native of Auburn, Washington, she received her law degree

from Gonzaga University and worked for several years as an Assistant Attorney General in Spokane. She served as President of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) and has been a national leader in issues affecting youth and the elderly.

The afternoon agenda includes a briefing on Ag Fish Water negotiations and presentations on the legislative landscape for water policy and transportation. On Friday, November 16th, the conference will feature a breakfast workshop by organizational development specialist Mickey Fearn. He will discuss how elected officials can meet the challenges they face in increasingly complex times. A workshop on emergency preparedness and response will feature key state leaders and include a presentation by King County Councilwoman Jane Hague, Past President of the National Association of Counties and a member of NACo's Homelands Security Task Force.

Wednesday's agenda includes meetings of the Board of Directors and Joint WACO/WSAC Boards of Directors, the Legislative Steering Committee and the Timber Counties. The Urban County Caucus and Rural Issues Subcommittee meet on Thursday afternoon.

Thursday evening will feature the Scholarship Fund Auction & Dinner. Every two years the Association holds an auction to help realize the educational dreams of the children of county employees. Not only do the proceeds go to a good cause, but also it is one of the premiere social events in the Association. This year, the Thursday evening banquet and auction will take place at the fabulous Kiana Lodge - transportation provided - and Spokane County Commissioner Phil Harris will be the auctioneer. You don't want to miss this event!

The agenda is available on our website. Go to www.wacounties.org/wsac/Conference.

The Courthouse Journal

The *Courthouse Journal* is published weekly by the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) and the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC).

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly deadline is noon Thursday.

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35 Courthouses Get a Visit

WSAC Executive Director Bill Vogler and WACO Executive Director Debbie Wilke recently completed two more rounds of visits to county courthouses bringing the total to 35.

Week one counties included Snohomish, Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Jefferson. Cowlitz, Clark, Klickitat, Skamania, Grays Harbor and Mason were on the week two agenda.

While the same local government challenges face every county, the uniqueness of each is very evident. San Juan County agendas revolve around the ferry landings and part of the county transportation plans includes dock replacements on some of the 500+ islands comprising the county (and that is at high tide). Klickitat County abounds with the beautiful sight of "black tails" while Snohomish laments the sight of "white tails" at Paine Field. The deer in Klickitat County share the gorgeous canyons with elk and other wild life. "White tails" in Snohomish County are the Boeing jets waiting to be delivered to buyers. The tails are not painted until delivery is taken of the plane. Those at Paine Field represent cancelled or delayed orders.

Coupeville, the county seat of Island County, gets our vote for best Halloween decorations. The entire city spares no effort when it comes to strategically placing straw life-size characters that

carry out a specific theme. One "gentleman" was seen escaping from a window of the county commissioners' temporary quarters. The most impressive display brought a somber note to the tour and was yet another reminder of the recent national tragedies. The local hospital portrayed three firefighters in full gear hoisting the American flag.

As time permits, local tours are taken. This week included the ultra-efficient new Skamania County Jail and a climb up the ladder to the clock tower in the Grays Harbor County Courthouse. The repair and retrofitting are complete and the results are impressive. Bill Vogler took time to sign the wall surrounding the clock. Local custom is that visitors leave their signatures. In all his years as auditor and county commissioner for Grays Harbor County, Bill never got around to it before.

It is a wonderful experience to travel throughout Washington and visit all the people who make local government work. The county officials are great, the scenery is picture-postcard perfect and the places of local interest are well worth visiting. If you haven't visited all of the 39 counties, you just do not know what you are missing! The week of November 5th will include visits to Kitsap, Clallam and Pierce Counties.

News Briefs

Memorial for Michael Redman next Friday

A public gathering to celebrate the life of Michael C. "Mike" Redman, executive director for the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA) from 1977 to 1994, will be held at 1 p.m. on Friday, November 9 at the Women's University Club, 1105 Sixth Avenue (corner of Sixth and Spring), Seattle, Washington.

Bald Eagle Proposed for Protection Downgrade

The Department of Fish and Wildlife is proposing to reclassify the Bald Eagle from a threatened to a sensitive species under Washington's Endangered Species Program. Although the recommendation is scheduled to be presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission at its Decem-

ber meeting, action on the reclassification proposal will be delayed if the US Fish and Wildlife Service has not delisted the bald eagle by that time. Comments are sought on the proposal and will be accepted by DFW until November 22, 2001.

Documents regarding the reclassification can be found at the agency website, www.wa.gov/wdfw or by calling 360-902-2515. Comments should be submitted to the Endangered Species Section Manager, WDFW, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091.

New Recording Manager Hired in Snohomish County

Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor, recently hired Lisa Goldsworthy on October 1, as the new Recording Manager for the Auditor's Office. Diana Bradrick, former Recording Manager, went to the State Archives as their new Deputy State Archivist in September. Lisa comes to Snohomish County with a

wealth of experience as the former Recording Manager in the Thurston County Auditor's Office and most recently as the Chief Deputy Auditor for Thurston County.

Governor Appoints Walla Walla County Prosecutor to Commission

Walla Walla County Prosecutor Jim Nagle has been appointed to the Sentencing Guideline Commission by Governor Locke for a three-year term. The Commission evaluates state sentencing policy for both the adult and juvenile justice system.

New Prosecutor in Klickitat County

County Commissioners have named Tim O'Neill as the Klickitat County Prosecuting Attorney for the unexpired term of Jim Hagarty, who left the office for a job as a U.S. Attorney. O'Neill has been with the prosecutor's office since 1999.

Two New MRSC Web Pages - Reduction in Force and Energy

Reduction in Force - Layoff

Recent events make this a difficult time: the public looks to government for continued and in some cases expand services at a time when government is facing uncertainty in its revenue sources. Since personnel costs consume a vast majority of local government expenditures, if budgets are to be balanced (as they must), layoffs or reductions in force may need to be considered.

When layoffs become a necessity, there are a host of issues that must be addressed. What notice, if any, must be given to the affected workers? How are the workers to be laid off selected? Do the employees in the positions to be eliminated have "bumping rights" over other employees? What impact, if any, will the layoffs have on protected classes of employees, such as older employees or minorities, thereby possibly giving

rise to discrimination complaints. Do the layoffs need to be bargained? What benefits are available to those who have been laid off? Will tasks formerly performed by the laid off workers continue to be performed by the remaining staff members, thus requiring changes in job descriptions and, possibly, salaries?

MRSC has created a resource page to help with the layoff process. Two counties have provided sample layoff language from their personnel policies and labor contracts. There are also a number of items available for library loan also noted on the page. The URL for the Web page is: <http://www.mrsc.org/personnel/layoff.htm>

Energy Resources

Energy shortages, higher prices, demands for sustainable resources, siting energy facilities and transmission

lines, and safety issues currently have had our attention in recent months. MRSC has created a series of Web pages that focus on energy resource planning. The pages provide topical overviews, links regulatory agencies, provide reference sources for research, and sample land use policies and regulations. Local governments have opportunities to become involved in a variety of energy resource issues. Among the issues are energy conservation, participating in major energy facilities siting decisions, franchising activities for energy transmission and distribution facilities, facilitating the development of alternative (wind, solar, biomass) energy facilities, and developing land use policies that provide guidance as to where energy facilities should be located in their communities. The Energy Resource URL is: <http://www.mrsc.org/planning/energy/E-main.htm>

DSHS Forwards Budget Reductions to OFM

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has forwarded its 15% reduction packages totaling \$472 million general fund state (\$690 million total funds) to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for the Governor and his staff to review. This is part of

the Governor's initial request to agencies to reduce programs by \$600 million or 15%. It is important to note that the revenue deficit may vary dramatically depending both on the incoming caseload forecast due November 14 and revenue forecast due November 20. But it could

swell as high as \$1 billion or more. Since the Governor has taken K-12 education off the table, the bulk of the reductions will come from DSHS, the state's biggest agency with a biennial budget for 2001-2003 of \$15 billion in total funds,

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The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Forwards Budget Reductions to OFM

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regardless of the size of the deficit.

Many of you have already received budget summaries from WSAC staff and Tom Bristow, Local Government Liaison, DSHS, as well as Secretary Braddock, DSHS. Due to technical difficulties at DSHS, their budget website does not have additional detail available at this time but it is expected early next week. Please go to www.wa.gov.dshs/budget/index.html at that time. We will also be discussing these proposals at the WSAC Legislative Conference in Silverdale, November 14 – 16 in particular at the Legislative Steering Committee at noon on Wednesday, November 14.

This article will give you just the lowlights of the proposals. While DSHS maintains that all of the reductions are extremely painful for them to make and will cause severe harm to many of the state’s most vulnerable people, it does appear that the cumulative impact across the agency will be particularly devastating to counties. Not only are there specific cuts to programs we directly administer, but there are numerous indirect cuts where the impact on local government is not particularly considered. Such changes as the elimination of General Assistance or the closure of additional wards at Western State Hospital will all have a direct impact on existing county jail overcrowding and emergency services such as housing and food banks. The Department also chooses to propose not-so-covert strategies to assert state control over community mental health and the RSNs, while ostensibly seeking to “retrieve” county/RSN reserve funds and reduce provider administration. On top of the recently concluded and difficult contract negotiations, changes in the funding formula, reductions in beds at Western State without commensurate community resources, this may be the final nail in the coffin of what was once a nationally recognized system of community-based mental health care.

Other county program areas are also significantly impacted. Becca funds are slashed, county juvenile justice prevention programs severely reduced; the nationally known transition program for persons with developmental disabilities is terminated along with large reductions to county-administered employment and day programs. The just appropriated

funds for substance treatment for the gravely disabled and meth users are cut along with recovery beds compounding the potential loss of Cedar Hills treatment facility in King County.

The list below is just a sampling of the reductions. WSAC encourages all of you to become engaged in these budget exercises by writing to the Governor, Marty Brown, Director, OFM, Dennis Braddock, Secretary, DSHS and your local legislators expressing your concerns about the impacts to counties. Remember that the loss of both county-administered programs and other DSHS programs that contribute income to your community will have impacts on many of your other systems such as criminal justice. It is also important to note the impact on your own community’s economic well being as these funds and jobs

disappear. The potential re-arrangement and termination of some of the RSNs alone would cause the loss of well-paid family wage jobs in your community.

As stated above, these are just selected cuts. But you can see how far-reaching they are and devastating to your communities. You should also be aware of cuts in the Office of Community Development to emergency shelter and food programs further compounding the situation. Fortunately, it appears the I-695 backfill has not been given up as lost despite the many news articles, though the cuts to DSHS will dwarf those dollar amounts.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Jean Wessman, WSAC staff.

Sample DSHS Reductions by Division and Administration

(\$ in thousands)

	GF-S	Total
CHILDREN’S ADMINISTRATION		
Elimination of both secure and regular crisis residential centers (CRCs) and other adolescent prevention and intervention programs	\$ 16.9	\$ 18.2
JUVENILE ADMINISTRATION		
Reduce Becca funding	\$ 11.2	\$ 20.6
Reduce county juvenile justice programs, sentencing alternative	2.8	2.8
MENTAL HEALTH		
Eliminate service for non-Medicaid, non-acute clients	\$ 11.2	\$ 20.6
Eliminate smaller non-core programs, i.e., atypical drugs, DMIO, and Expanded Community Services	8.4	11.6
Limit number of RSNs and reserves	6.5	13.1
Limit number of RSNs and administrative costs	3.9	7.9
Special Commitment Ctr Reduce LRA staffing ratios, mitigation costs	3.8	3.8
Close ½ PALS ward at Western	1.0	2.1
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES		
Change definition of persons who qualify for service	\$ 12.9	\$ 21.9
Reduce employment/day programs by 30% in 2003	11.0	16.1
Reduce family support	4.1	5.0
Freeze high school transition	1.2	1.2
Close State-operated Living Arrangements	1.5	3.0
Freeze case manager hiring, reduce RHC staff	5.7	7.3
AGING AND ADULT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION		
Decrease eligibility for COPEs/Medicaid Personal Care	\$ 31.9	\$ 64.2
ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION		
Eliminate General Assistance program	\$ 55.0	\$ 55.5
Reduce child care subsidy	8.8	14.5
Eliminate DASA treatment funding for TANF clients	3.0	3.0
ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE ABUSE		
Eliminate funds for gravely disabled	\$ 2.8	\$ 2.8
Eliminate 24% of recovery house beds	1.0	1.0
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION		
Eliminate medical assistance for medically indigent, GAU and ADATSA (total funds lower due to increased costs in other programs to maximize DSH income)	\$ 74.6	\$ 61.6
Decrease reimbursement for prescription drugs	32.3	67.4
Eliminate adult dental except for emergencies	17.7	33.1
Eliminate medical coverage for immigrants	10.5	10.5
Eliminate ticket to work medical program	1.3	2.7

Department of Health Submits Budget Cuts

The Department of Health was asked to submit budget reductions totaling 15% of the Fiscal Year 2003 state general fund appropriation, which is approximately \$10 million. About 1/5 of the Department's budget is state general fund. Based on OFM direction, which looks toward a restructuring of state government in order to provide government functions that need to be sustained in the 2003-05 Biennium, the Department has identified programs to consider for reduction or elimination.

This is the first step in a long process that will culminate in the Governor's proposed budget released in December. OFM and the Governor may include some or all of the DOH proposals.

The good news is that the Department of Health did not recommend any reduction in Local Capacity Development Funds, which come to local health jurisdictions as non-categorical funds to be used for priorities determined locally. This is particularly good news since these funds have been reduced in each of the previous two biennia.

However, there are some proposed reductions that directly impact local public health jurisdictions. Most notably is a \$2,916,207 reduction in AIDSNET funding. This program supports the six regional AIDS networks that prevent the spread of HIV through counseling, testing, partner referral, outreach, intervention, case management and other locally administered services. Funding would be reduced, and each regional AIDSNET would need to prioritize how the reduction would impact the work in their region. Another proposed reduction that directly impacts local health is a \$492,235 elimination of the Child Death Review Program which provides funding to local health jurisdictions to decrease preventable deaths of children by identifying needed changes in child health policy and child protection services.

In 2001, the Legislature recognized the importance of ensuring water quality of Group B Water Systems by appropriating \$1.6 million to local health jurisdictions for assistance to and monitoring of these systems. DOH has submitted a proposal that would reduce that funding to local health jurisdictions by \$202,400 and result in fewer site visits and fewer systems being informed of water quality monitoring requirements.

Other reductions submitted to OFM to meet the 15% general fund reduction requirement include:

Children's Hospital Regional Medical Center - \$182,000

This contract provides assistance to improve statewide systems of care for children with special health needs. This option would reduce funding for this effort.

Client Services - HIV/AIDS - \$303,600

Client services early intervention program supports limited medical, dental, prescription drug, case management and other services by contract and by direct payment for low to moderate income people living with HIV/AIDS. The option reduces state funding in anticipation of additional federal funding.

Community and Family Health Administrative - \$50,000

This reduction will be accomplished by putting a number of efficiency measures in place across the division.

Drinking Water Conservation - \$181,650

This program promotes water use efficiency by providing information and enhanced technical assistance to public water systems. This option would reduce these activities.

Farmers Market - \$263,030

Eliminates funding that allows low-income women and children who receive WIC benefits to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at Farmers Markets.

Health Policy - \$85,183

This option reduces policy analysis and support to agency programs.

Health Promotion - \$236,400

This option would shift certain health promotion activities from General Fund State to Federal funds. No change in services.

Health Systems Quality Assurance - \$165,205

This option is a combined package that reduces capacity to review proposed changes in health professional credentialing and mandated insurance benefits; eliminates approval and monitoring of health system anti-competitive practices

(anti-trust) and redundant state regulation of corneal eye banks; and reduces costs through efficiency measures.

Hearing Loss Intervention - \$87,032

This program provides technical assistance to hospitals establishing newborn hearing screening programs and tracking and monitoring of children identified with congenital hearing loss. Federal funding would be used in place of State General Funds for this program.

Immunization Program Operational Funding - \$363,805

This is a fund shift from State General Funds to Federal funding and does not represent a reduction in services. These activities support the immunization program through distribution of vaccines, technical assistance, monitoring immunization levels and education and outreach.

Infant and Child Product Safety - \$65,000

The intent of this program is to disseminate information on where parents and caretakers can obtain information on recalled and unsafe child products. The majority of work will have been completed by July 1, 2002. This program would be eliminated in the second year.

Neurodevelopment Centers - \$949,853

This funding supports the infrastructure to maintain the capacity for community-based, early intervention services for children with special health care needs and their families. This option would eliminate state funding for this program.

Northwest Family Center - \$174,064

This program receives federal, local and state funding and provides medical care, case management, mental health, outreach and dependency counseling to HIV/AIDS positive women and children. This option would eliminate state funding.

Shellfish Laboratory Testing Fee - \$126,000

The state laboratory does not presently charge commercial shellfish growers a fee for testing shellfish and marine water samples. This option would establish a fee to cover these costs.

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State Board of Health - \$121,552

This option includes reduction in staff hours for a policy position that works to establish programs for audio and visual screening for children and includes a number of administrative reductions.

Syphilis Testing Fee - \$80,000

This option establishes a fee for laboratory testing of syphilis specimens submitted by private physicians and clinics. Syphilis tests requested by public health and community health agencies would continue to be provided free of charge.

Vaccine Funding Savings - \$2,231,504

This is a one time only reduction for Fiscal Year 2002 due to temporary shortages and reduced availability of some of the medically recommended vaccines.

WIC Administration - \$423,016

This option is a reduction in state administration costs and local agencies

contract funds to support nutrition services and administration. These funds are separate from funding for the food prescription.

Workplace Breastfeeding Certification - \$83,000

Recent legislation allows employers to use the designation of "infant friendly" on promotional materials. DOH was charged with developing and implementing criteria for this designation and review. This option would eliminate funding for this program.

Youth Suicide Prevention - \$258,264

The Youth Suicide Prevention program focuses on contracted services, including community response, youth and school involvement and partnerships with key constituent groups. Funding for this program would be eliminated.

Also of note are reductions in children and family support programs proposed by the Office of Community De-

velopment that are of concern. A \$470,220 elimination of the FY 03 partial cash match for Head Start grantee programs. Head Start provides comprehensive pre-school services to low-income children and children with disabilities between the ages of three and five years. A reduction of \$2,144,371 is also proposed for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). ECEAP is a comprehensive school readiness program that provides services to at-risk children and families in poverty. The \$2,144,371 reduction represents 3.86% of ECEAP's FY02-03 \$55.5 million general fund state budget. There are also proposed reductions in Emergency Food Assistance Program of \$565,000 and in the Overnight Youth Shelter Program of \$120,000.

Some of the reductions in the Department of Health and the Office of Community Development represent not only direct reductions to local health departments, but also reductions in services available to vulnerable citizens.

Washington Experiences Increased Recycling Rate

The Department of Ecology announced that Washington businesses and residents improved their recycling habits in 2000, raising the state-wide recycling rate to 35 percent, up from 32 percent the year before.

In 1989, the Waste Not Washington Act established a 50 percent recycling goal for the state. The highest level achieved so far was 40 percent in 1995. By contrast, the national average is 28 percent.

Market improvements for various commodities, such as metals, newspaper and container glass, as well as improved

commercial-collection programs have contributed to the rate's rise, according to Ecology officials.

"We've found that the recycling rate can go up and down like the stock market," said Cullen Stephenson, who manages Ecology's solid-waste program. "There is no one culprit to blame for a drop, but all of us can help by decreasing the amount of waste we produce and recycling the waste we can't prevent."

Just as the recycling rate goes up due to economic conditions and effective recycling programs, it can easily drop because of poor resale markets, lack of

public education, attitudes about recycling, and product packaging and design, said Stephenson. "We have to make it easy to recycle, and we have to provide information about why and how to recycle - but that's not enough. Products and packaging have to be able to be recycled," he said. "We'd like people to be more aware of what they buy, what it's made of and how it's packaged, and how they dispose of it." "The small rise in the rate tells us that something in the system is working better, and we need all citizens and businesses to remain vigilant and committed." Stephenson added.

The Spokesman Review October 30, 2001

Commission won't let citizens set pay

By: John Craig Staff writer

Pend Oreille County commissioners voted Monday to scrap a plan to let a board of constituents set their salaries. They feared the citizen board would be too generous.

When the commissioners voted earlier this month to adopt a new state law

allowing citizen salary commissions, they failed to read the fine print. The county commissioners thought incorrectly that the 10-member salary board would have only advisory power.

Instead, state law gives the new salary commissions binding authority over commissioners' salaries. Only voters, by referendum petition, could override salary decisions.

Pend Oreille County Commissioners Mike Hanson, Joel Jacobsen and Sam Nicholas weren't worried that the salary commission would cut their pay, which already is the lowest in northeastern Washington. But they wanted to be

able to reject part or all of any increase in tight budget years.

Individual commissioners could still return part of their salaries to the county treasury, but no group action would be possible. The result could be financial anarchy, especially if one commissioner were in a tight race for re-election.

The political pressure can be intense even when the commissioners vote unanimously to give themselves raises. Commissioners were blistered by county employees in 1999 when they voted to accept the full 8 percent annual raises

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Commission won't let citizens set pay

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due to them under a 1979 resolution - even though they had often taken smaller raises.

Under the 1979 resolution - which is again in effect - commissioners get automatic raises of 8 percent a year unless they vote to take less. The state-authorized salary board might have reduced some of the political heat for pay hikes, but commissioners wanted to be able to veto any increase they felt was excessive or at least politically imprudent.

For example, Hanson said, "I don't perceive that, unless the magic genie wiggles his nose pretty hard, that we're going to be able to do any salary increases for anybody this year." Commissioners couldn't in good conscience take a raise while laying off county employees, he said.

Other commissioners in northeastern Washington counties already had decided not to implement the state-

sanctioned salary boards for similar reasons.

"We have virtually no new revenue coming in," said Greg Partch, chairman of the Whitman County commissioners. "We need to diversify our economy. Until we can do that, this isn't the time to be raising commissioners' wages."

So the Whitman commissioners will stick with their system of automatic annual 2 percent raises.

Ferry County Commissioner Mike Blankenship said the salary commission plan was rejected there because of concerns about expenses for the salary commission itself. Also, Blankenship said the Ferry County commissioners had doubts about their ability to keep a 10-member board active.

The state-sanctioned salary boards would consist of six residents drawn at random from voter registration rolls and four members appointed by commissioners - one each from the ranks of businessmen, professional personnel managers, lawyers and organized labor.

The system is similar to one that

Spokane County established on its own last year. But the Spokane County salary board has only advisory power over salaries.

Pend Oreille commissioners and several of their counterparts in rural northeastern Washington counties agreed that salaries need to be higher.

"It's pretty hard to get good commissioners if you can't pay them a living wage," said Lincoln County Commissioner Bill Graedel.

Lincoln County voters evidently agreed, and declined to vote out any of the commissioners there who voted in 1996 to raise their pay incrementally from \$23,040 that year to the current \$46,350.

At \$29,760 a year, Pend Oreille County commissioners have the lowest pay in the region. Even in less populated Ferry County, commissioners are paid \$31,500 a year. Commissioners earn \$45,000 in Stevens County and \$41,820 in Whitman County.

The Olympian Tuesday, October 30, 2001

OUR VIEWS: Settle court dispute now

Who should pay the health insurance premium costs for judges in the state of Washington?

That question is at the core of a nasty dispute between state lawmakers and county commissioners that has been simmering for six years.

Thurston County commissioners are to be commended for attempting to get the issue resolved once and for all.

Counties can't simply add another Superior Court judge to the payroll. Every Superior Court judicial position must first be approved by state lawmakers.

State court officials generally come into a county, audit the number and kinds of cases filed, check case backlogs, then make a recommendation to the Legislature on the creation of a new judicial position.

Lawmakers then weigh that recommendation against other requests for state funding.

The state plays a pivotal role be-

cause the state picks up half of each judge's salary. The counties pick up the other half.

As benefits for health, dental and vision coverage for judges began to evolve, the state picked up the entire cost. That was the practice until 1995.

At that time, state legislators -- without consulting county officials -- simply added a short note to the state budget changing the payment practice for health care benefits.

The note said the state and counties would split the insurance premium costs, just like they split judicial salaries.

It was a sneaky move on the part of lawmakers.

They didn't write a new state law. They didn't hold public hearings on the proposal. They simply made a notation in the budget.

County officials were understandably upset. Many counties refused to pay the bill submitted by the administrator for the courts.

It's been six years and the issue is still not resolved.

Earlier this year, lawmakers turned up the heat. They voted to withhold funds meant to help counties with car tax losses from any county not paying half of judicial benefits.

For Thurston County, it would have

meant the loss of \$1 million.

Commissioner Diane Oberquell was blunt in her criticism of legislators. She said they "took it upon themselves to blackmail the counties who were not paying."

Rather than jeopardize \$1 million, Thurston County caved in and sent in -- under protest -- an \$11,000 payment.

Counties should not be held hostage over their legitimate disagreement over benefit payments.

Now Thurston commissioners and their counterparts in Mason, Klickitat, Ferry, Franklin, Benton, Pend Oreille, Stevens and Okanogan counties have taken the matter to court, asking a judge to rule on the legality of shifting the costs of judicial benefits from the state to the counties.

This dispute should have been resolved years ago.

Legislators reportedly withheld permission to add a much-needed judicial position in one county to show their determination in getting counties to pay up.

That kind of political tomfoolery must stop. The best way to settle this disagreement is for a judge to render a decision based on the merits of the case. Then the counties and the state must abide by that decision.

Coming Events

November 12-15

Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs' Annual Fall Conference, Doubletree Hotel, Pasco

November 13-14

Cost Allocation Training, Sponsored by **Washington Assn of Prosecuting Attorneys Support Enforcement Project**, Doubletree Hotel, Spokane City Center

November 14

WSAC/WACO Joint Board meeting, Silverdale Hotel on the Bay, Silverdale

November 14

WCIF Board Meeting, in conjunction with WSAC Fall Legislative Conference, 10 am - 12 pm

November 14-16

WSAC Fall Legislative Conference, Silverdale Hotel on the Bay, Silverdale

November 14-16

ACHS Meeting, Port Orchard, Givens Center

December 6

WSALPHO Meeting, Wyndam garden Hotel, SeaTac

December 13-14

Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' Annual Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza, Seattle

2002 Meetings

January 11

WACO Board Meeting, Washington Counties Building, Olympia

January 16-18, 2002

ACHS Meeting, Olympia

January 30 - February 1, 2002

Legislative Rally, Olympia

January 30

Tri-Association (WSAC/WACO/AWC) Legislative Reception, St. Martin's College, Olympia

February 7, 2002

WSALPHO Meeting, Olympia

March 20-22, 2002

ACHS Meeting, Tacoma, Pierce County

April 11-12, 2002

WSAC Western District Meeting, Rosario Resort, San Juan Islands, San Juan County

April 25-26, 2002

WSAC Eastern District Meeting, Sun Mountain Lodge, Winthrop

May 15-17, 2002

ACHS Meeting, Spokane

June 17, 2002

WSALPHO Meeting, Bellevue (Connected to WSAC Summer Convention)

June 18-21, 2002

WSAC Summer Convention, Bellevue Inn, Bellevue, King County

July 17-19, 2002

ACHS Meeting, San Juan County (or location in Northwest WA)

September 12, 2002

WSALPHO Meeting, Spokane

Employment Opportunities

SNOHOMISH COUNTY COUNCIL, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST.

The Snohomish County Council invites qualified applicants to submit a statement of qualifications together with application form and response to supplemental questions by 4 PM, Friday, November 9, 2001. The position supports both policy development and fiscal oversight functions. Candidates must have law or master's degree in public policy, administration or equivalent field plus demonstrated experience in one or more of the following areas: land use and growth management; law and justice; public works; and/or general county operations policy and budget analysis. A bachelor degree and at least five years experience in any of these areas will be considered. Writing, speaking, collaboration and team skills will be evaluated. Salary range: \$4618-6525 per month. Job duty ques-

tions? Call Tom Dickson (425) 388-3494. The Council is an equal opportunity employer. Direct requests for application packet and return all submittals to: Dept. of Human Resources, MS-503, 3000 Rockefeller Ave, Everett, WA. 98201-4046, (425) 388-3411. Or, go to the Employment page at our web site: <http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us>

CLARK COUNTY, BENEFITS MANAGER. Clark County seeks a Benefits Manager to develop and manage the County's benefits programs with an emphasis on insurance benefits, deferred compensation retirement programs and HRIS. Serves as staff specialist and manager for FMLA and ADA compliance, ensures proper administration systems and procedures are in place, and provides counsel and advice to employees and managers regarding benefits and related matters. Bachelor's degree and four to six years professional-level human resources experience with a focus in managing the employee benefits function for a large organization is required. This is a dynamic envi-

ronment; experience in evaluating, recommending and implementing significant benefit changes is required. Employment application and letter of interest are required; detailed position information and applications available at www.co.clark.wa.us and from Clark County HR, 1013 Franklin Street, Vancouver, WA. (360)397-6018; TDD (360)397-6032. EOE.

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY — Department of Public Services, Planning & Building Division, has an opening for a Plans Examiner/Lead Building Inspector with a monthly salary of \$3,439 to \$4,110 DOQ. Min. Quals: Requires six years of employment as a building inspector, plan reviewer, or related position. Emphasis during at least two of the years as a plans examiner is preferred. Two year degree in building technology, engineering technology, or closely related field; applicable experience may be substituted at a rate of one for one; I.C.B.O. Building Inspector Certification and at least two other I.C.B.O. certifications or equivalent; valid WSDL. I.C.B.O. Plans Examiner

certification is preferred. Requires the physical ability to crawl under buildings, climb ladders, and walk underdeveloped terrain. Proficiency with Windows based applications. Applications and a complete job description may be obtained from Grays Harbor County Management Services, 3rd Floor Administration Building, Suite 33, P.O. Box 790, Montesano, WA 98563 (360) 249-4144 or at our website at www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us. Open until filled. Grays Harbor County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

MASON COUNTY - PUBLIC WORKS DEPUTY DIRECTOR. \$4,854 to \$5,765/mo. Responsible for planning, organizing, & directing engineering activities of the Public Works Department. Requires Bachelor's degree in civil engineering or related field & 4 yrs of professional-level experience in public administration including the design & construction of roads, bridges, drainage systems & traffic engineering. Must be a registered

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professional civil engineer in the State of Washington & valid WSDL. County application required & available at Mason County Human Resources, 411 N Fifth St, Shelton, WA 98584; or call (360) 427-7265. Applications accepted until position filled.

YAKIMA COUNTY, SENIOR PLANNER. Annual Salary Range: \$38,411 to \$55,061. Hiring Range to \$43,388. The Yakima County Planning Department, an organization known throughout the State of Washington for its leadership and innovation in urban, rural and environmental planning issues, is seeking a high energy individual to be a part of the team. This position will be involved with or will manage complex, often highly visible subdivision, zoning and/or environmental projects at all levels of review. This position requires the equivalent of a Bachelor's Degree in Planning and three years of progressively responsible planning experience including current planning. Experience with ARC/info, ARC/view and WA State land use and environmental law are desirable. Check out the County's web-

site at www.co.yakima.wa.us or www.visityakima.com for more information. Filing Deadline: Thursday, November 15, 2001. Apply to: Yakima County Human Resources, 128 N. 2nd Street, Courthouse Room 412, Yakima, WA 98909. Phone: (509)574-2220. Email: human.resources@co.yakima.wa.us

AUDITOR'S OFFICE, CHIEF DEPUTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE. Salary range: \$49,500 - \$62,184 / Annually. Closing date: November 13, 2001. The Whatcom County Auditor's Office is seeking a proven leader for the position of Chief Deputy Auditor. This is highly creative position offers a variety of leadership opportunities working with diverse divisions utilizing strong supervision and communication skills. The person in this position will motivate employees and use innovation in accomplishing goals. Works with the elected department head on planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling the efforts of staff, and other work and community groups to accomplish the work, mission, goals and vision of the Department and the County. Repre-

sents Whatcom County by maintaining a professional approach and demeanor in all activities. Ensures compliance with department/county policies and procedures, collective bargaining agreements and legal requirements. Manages programs and staff in a manner that ensures expenditures remain within budget guidelines. Develops relationships with staff, other departments and individuals outside county government that encourage participation, teamwork, effective relationships and use of resources. Manages all areas of the Auditor's office operations including internal auditing, elections, recording and licensing, as assigned. Develops and maintains relationships with political parties. Plans, conducts and presents at public meetings for various community groups and schools. **QUALIFICATIONS:** Requires a Bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration or a related field AND five years progressively responsible auditing experience INCLUDING two years supervisory experience. Masters degree in public, business administration or a related field is preferred. Two years of financial management or accounting experi-

ence desirable. Current Certified Public Accountant or Certified Internal Auditor certificate highly desirable. **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:** Must obtain designation as a Certified Election Administrator within two years of employment and maintain throughout employment. Must pass a driving record abstract that meets County standards and possess a valid driver's license at time of hire and throughout employment. Must pass a background check. Depending on area of assignment, may be required to obtain a First Aid/CPR card within six (6) months of employment and maintain throughout employment. Applications must be received in Human Resources by the closing date. You may also fax a copy of your application materials to (360) 738-2521 by the closing date, and mail or drop off the originals. To request that application materials be mailed to you please call (360) 676-6802. Whatcom County Human Resources is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except holidays. For more information visit our website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us.

vote.wa.gov

**Your Official Online Source for
Washington State Voting and Elections Information**

**Results will be available beginning on Tuesday,
November 6 after 8:00 PM.**

